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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal and ever blessed God, strengthen our Senators today to walk in Your steps. Help them to walk in Your humility so that they will strive to serve. Help them to walk in Your courage so that nothing will deflect them from the path of integrity. Help them to walk in Your endurance so that discouragement will not hinder them from reaching laudable goals. Help them to walk in Your loyalty so that nothing will destroy their devotion to You.

Lord, place Your truth in their minds, Your love in their hearts, and Your kindness on their lips.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 14, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

Following that morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S.J. Res. 10 and S.J. Res. 24. Both of these resolutions regard the balanced budget amendment. At approximately 10:45, there will be two votes on those resolutions.

We also hope to consider the Department of Defense authorization conference report today as well as the House Republican payroll tax bill.

PROTECTING MIDDLE-CLASS WORKERS

Mr. REID. Madam President, this has become a familiar scene on Capitol Hill. As time ticks down to the wire, the House has sent the Senate yet another bill that will not pass. Meanwhile, American families stare down a \$1,000 tax increase, and on January 1

they will be scrambling to afford the necessities because of Republican obstructionism that Americans don't understand.

It has become the Republican fall-back play: Waste precious time catering to tea party extremists when they could be working with Democrats to compromise.

Republican leaders have already spent weeks drumming up tea party support for legislation they knew was dead on arrival in the Senate. Now it is time to get this vote over with so real negotiations can begin to prevent a tax increase on 160 million middle-class Americans.

This morning I will ask unanimous consent to vote on the House-passed bill. Democrats were ready to vote on this legislation last night, but I can't set a vote at this time under Senate procedures without Senator MCCONNELL's approval. Even though we already knew the bill was dead, Senator MCCONNELL wasn't ready to hold a vote on it last night.

That is an about-face from just a few hours before—even as recently as yesterday morning, Tuesday morning—and on Monday, for example, when Senator MCCONNELL urged us to take up the House bill as soon as possible.

This is what he said:

My suggestion is that once this legislation comes over from the House, we pass it without delay.

That is what I tried to do last night—not pass it but at least have a vote on it.

Senator MCCONNELL repeated that call yesterday morning—Tuesday morning. Here is what he said yesterday morning:

I would suggest that our friends put the political games aside and give the American people the certainty and the jobs that they deserve. Take up the House bill, pass it right here in the Senate, and send it to the President . . . without theatrics and without delay.

Then yesterday afternoon Senator MCCONNELL said:

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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